

An End of Innocence

Were two people ever more innocent at the beginning of their lives than Adam and Eve? Immediately after sinning, though, they felt shame because of their nakedness, and they doubly showed their guilt by hiding from God. Do the truly innocent have any need to hide? Do the innocent need to feel shame?

Sin leaves a tarnish on a person's mind so that they do not look at life in quite the same way anymore. David expresses how this tarnish affected him in Psalm 40:12, "My iniquities have overtaken me, so that I am not able to look up." Paul later explains, "To the pure, all things are pure, but to those who are defiled and unbelieving nothing is pure; but even their mind and conscience are defiled" (Titus 1:15).

A well-known series of scriptures, beginning in Matthew 18:1, touch on innocence and its destruction. It starts with a question from the disciples: "Who then is greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" Jesus replies that unless we become as little children, we will not be in the Kingdom of Heaven. Is not the beauty of their innocence and the harmless vulnerability of little children a major reason why we find them so adorable? They produce no harm, shame, or guilt. But what happens as they become adults? They become sophisticated, worldly, cosmopolitan, cynical, suspicious, sarcastic, prejudiced, self-centered, cool, uninvolved, and many other negative things. They also seem to lose their zest for life. Sin does that.

MATTHEW HENRY'S CONCISE COMMENTARY ON THE BIBLE~GENESIS 3

3:1-5 Satan assaulted our first parents, to draw them to sin, and the temptation proved fatal to them. The tempter was the devil, in the shape and likeness of a serpent. Satan's plan was to draw our first parents to sin, and so to separate between them and their God. Thus the devil was from the beginning a murderer, and the great mischief maker.

The person tempted was the woman: it was Satan's policy to enter into talk with her when she was alone. There are many temptations to which being alone gives great advantage; but the communion of saints tends very much to their strength and safety.

Satan took advantage by finding her near the forbidden tree. They that would not eat the forbidden fruit, must not come near the forbidden tree. Satan tempted Eve that by her he might tempt Adam. It is his policy to send temptations by hands we do not suspect, and by those that have most influence upon us.

Satan questioned whether it were a sin or not, to eat of this tree. He did not disclose his design at first, but he put a question which seemed innocent. Those who would be safe, need to be shy of talking with the tempter. He quoted the command wrong. He spoke in a taunting way. The devil, as he is a liar, so he is a scoffer from the beginning; and scoffers are his children. It is the craft of Satan to speak of the Divine law as uncertain or unreasonable, and so to draw people to sin; it is our wisdom to keep up a firm belief of God's command, and a high respect for it. Has God said, Ye shall not lie, nor take his

name in vain, nor be drunk, etc.? Yes, I am sure he has, and it is well said; and by his grace I will abide by it. It was Eve's weakness to enter into this talk with the serpent: she might have perceived by his question, that he had no good design, and should therefore have started back.

Satan teaches men first to doubt, and then to deny. He promises advantage from their eating this fruit. He aims to make them discontented with their present state, as if it were not so good as it might be, and should be. No condition will of itself bring content, unless the mind be brought to it. He tempts them to seek preferment, as if they were fit to be gods.

Satan ruined himself by desiring to be like the Most High, therefore he sought to infect our first parents with the same desire, that he might ruin them too. And still the devil draws people into his interest, by suggesting to them hard thoughts of God, and false hopes of advantage by sin. Let us, therefore, always think well of God as the best good, and think ill of sin as the worst evil: thus let us resist the devil, and he will flee from us.